

Message Text

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ACTION DOTE-00

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 EB-07 L-02 CIAE-00 INR-07

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FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5971

INFO AMCONSUL VANCOUVER

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DOT PASS LINDBERG

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELTN, CA

SUBJ: ALASKA HIGHWAY - HAINES RECONSTRUCTION

REF: OTTAWA 1040

1. FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT INTERNAL GOC DELIBERATIONS WAS GIVEN TCO ON MARCH 20 BY SENIOR MOT OFFICIAL. HE CONFIRMED MISS HALL'S INFORMATION ABOUT DISAGREEMENT AMONG AGENCIES AND FELT THIS WOULD DELAY DEVELOPMENT OF A PROMPT RESPONSE TO DOT/FHWA. DESCRIBED DRAFT PAPER MENTIONED REFTTEL AS REFLECTING PRESENTLY ONLY STYLISTIC CONSENSUS, WITH MANY HESITATIONS AND RESERVATIONS EXPRESSED.

2. AMONG THE ISSUES IDENTIFIED AS OF MAJOR CONCERN ARE:

A. NEED FOR A CLEAR-CUT FINANCIAL COMMITMENT BY USG TO COVER ALL COSTS OF ENTIRE PROJECT (VIEW OF MOT AND TREASURY BOARD) TO AVOID FUTURE PRESSURE ON GOC TO COMPLETE RECONSTRUCTION IF US CONGRESS FAILS PROVIDE FULL FUNDING.

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B. DEVELOPMENTAL PRIORITIES IN THAT PART OF YUKON ARE LOW AND PHYSICAL RESOURCES NEEDED ELSEWHERE MAY BE DIVERTED TO THAT AREA EVEN THOUGH FINANCED BY USG. ALSO, THERE IS CONCERN ABOUT INFLATIONARY IMPACT OF PROJECT WHEN SEEN IN CONJUNCTION WITH LARGE NUMBER OTHER HIGHWAY PROJECTS IN ALBERTA, BRITISH COLUMBIA AND YUKON AND LIMITED NUMBER OF CONTRACTORS.

C. WHILE NO OPPOSITION FROM GOVERNMENT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA (WHICH MUST APPROVE) HAS SURFACED, ITS SENSITIVITIES ARE ALWAYS IN MIND. A HOST OF DIFFICULT HIGHWAY NEGOTIATIONS (INCLUDING COST SHARING) ARE UNDERWAY WITH THE PROVINCE. THERE IS FEAR B.C. CABINET MIGHT BECOME UPSET IF PRESENTED WITH A FEDERAL POSITION ON THIS ISSUE BEFORE AGREEMENT TO SATISFACTORY TERMS ON OTHER HIGHWAY PROGRAMS HAS BEEN REACHED.

3. EXTAFF PARTICIPATION IN THE INTERAGENCY DELIBERATIONS, OUR SOURCE SUGGESTED, WAS AT ANY UNDULY LOW LEVEL. IT APPEARS CONCERNED PRIMARILY WITH BARGAINING THEORY, POINTING OUT THAT CANADA WOULD BE GIVEN SOMETHING TO THE UNITED STATES WITHOUT GETTING ANYTHING IN RETURN. HOWEVER, NO SPECIFIC QUID PRO QUO HAS BEEN SUGGESTED. WHEN ASKED WHETHER A TRANS-MAINE HIGHWAY TO LINK QUEBEC AND NEW BRUNSWICK HAD BEEN RAISED, HE REPLIED THIS OFT-MENTIONED PROPOSAL HAD A VERY LOW PRIORITY IN PRESENT GOC THINKING.

4. AS A POSITIVE NOTE, THIS MOT OFFICIAL SUGGESTED THAT THE CHAIRMAN OF THE CANADIAN INTERAGENCY GROUP, B. G. WILLIAMS, (SENIOR ASSISTANT DEPUTY MINISTER IN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS) WAS ONE OF CANADA'S ABLEST CIVIL SERVANTS AND WE WOULD EXPECT HIM TO MOVE QUICKLY TO GET ALL ISSUES RESOLVED SO THAT CLEAR-CUT ANSWERS COULD BE GIVEN TO USG.

5. COMMENT: EMBASSY SPECULATES THAT GOC MIGHT ANTICIPATE FAIRLY GENERAL DOMESTIC CRITICISM FOR APPROVING PROJECT WHICH WOULD BE SEEN AS DESIGNED ALMOST SOLELY TO FACILITATE AMERICAN TRAFFIC FROM ONE PART OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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US TO ANOTHER. ADDITIONALLY, ALTHOUGH THERE WILL BE FULL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPAACT ASSESSMENT, GOC MIGHT BE SENSITIVE TO ENVIRONMENTAL CRITICISM FOR TAMPERING WITH SENSITIVE NORTHERN ECOLOGY BY PAVING ROAD ACROSS CANADIAN NORTHERN WILDERNESS WITHOUT JUSTIFIABLE BENEFIT FOR CANADA. THIS SENSITIVITY MAY BE ENHANCED BY PUBLIC CRITICISM OF RECENT INDICATIONS THAT GOC MIGHT BE PREPARED TO PROCEED WITH MACKENZIE VALLEY PIPELINE WITHOUT

WAITING FOR RESULTS OF BERGER COMMISSION STUDY OF EFFECTS
ON NATIVE RIGHTS AND ENVIRONMENT.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE BEING
KEPT INFORMED BY DOT AS TO ITS INFORMATION FROM
CANADIAN CONTACTS ON THIS MATTER. THUS, WE WILL BE
IN A POSITION TO PROVIDE MAXIMUM SUPPORT AND TO
RELATE THIS PROGRAM TO OTHER ASPECTS OF U.S. RELATIONS
WITH CANADA. MESSAGES SHOULD ALSO BE ADDRESSED TO
AMCONSUL VANCOUVER (BY POUCH IF CLASSIFIED). PORTER

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